

The University of Chicago

THE SOCIAL MATRIX FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDIDA-
CY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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WILLIAM LEWIS TROYER

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W. L. TROYER*

THE contemporary emphasis upon development of personality is, in important respects, distinctively modern. It embraces a twofold implication scarcely if ever observable in historic views of human nature.

There is, in the first place, a conception of unity, structure, organization, integration. Modern psychologists, to be sure, make much of intra-personal conflicts, but these are thought to arise from maladjustments within a functional whole, or between the whole and its surroundings. The warfare "in the members" is not one of irreconcilable opposites, such as "flesh" and "spirit" between which, by definition, there can be no peace or harmony.

The second phase of the implication stresses the fact of change. This functional whole which is personality to the modern thinker changes from time to time; follows, indeed, an orderly sequence of change, a sequence called growth. At the end, or anywhere along the sequence, personality is not the same as it was earlier, or at the beginning. There is continuity, but the reality considered is no self-consistent, immutable essence; it is rather a dynamic equilibrium.

Lately, in addition, there has been a strengthening disposition to consider this growth as something more than a self-enclosed process. Viewed from the biological angle, each individual is an organism living in dependent relation to an environment. In order that life may

go on at all, certain conditions must obtain within the environment, and the organism must be capable of making repeated drafts upon its surroundings to sustain and promote its unique organization and mode of functioning. Among human beings, at least, this dynamic biological situation is further extended and enriched in the social dimension. Sociologists emphasize the importance of group life as part of the environmental nexus. Social factors and processes must be included among the conditions required for survival and growth. Personality is then conceived to be the more or less stable and unique organization and mode of functioning which results from the interaction of the individual organism with this extended and socialized environment. Understanding of personality development is not complete until there is full appreciation of the effects in the person derived from participation in society.

A SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONIST APPROACH

This being true, a significant problem emerges for all who are concerned with the concept of personality development in the scientific study of religion, in theology, and in religious education. To understand and effectively promote the development of religious personality it is necessary to recognize and control the nurturing conditions in society. Such recognition and control, moreover, entails much more than the standing assumption in the religious tradition that participation in the fellowship of believers or communicants is a bulwark, if not actually a prerequisite, to salvation. History is replete with ceremonies of induction and continuing ritual which have

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served not only to perpetuate certain groups and institutions and ideologies, but also to mark the significant crises and accomplishments in the individual life-career. Theology and church polity alike have linked together the communion of the saints and the individual soul. For the most part, however, this relationship has been cherished for reasons other than alleged or acknowledged functional significance of the social milieu in the actual constitution and growth of personality. The modern viewpoint, in contrast, focuses emphasis upon just this latter aspect of the developmental situation. It asks what the materials of the social environment are upon which the individual makes drafts in becoming a religious personality.

The problem, as thus phrased, has a socio-psychological frame of reference; hence, it is only reasonable to turn to the field of social psychology for enlightenment. The present state of this new science is such, however, that a total or unified solution is unobtainable. Significant pioneer efforts have been made and valuable insights attained, but on the basis of great divergence in methods and interpretations. To make progress in dealing with specific problems, it is, practically speaking, necessary to seek out the implications of each of the various viewpoints; or, in choosing one, to "hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may." Adherence to the latter course, as in this present effort, if not yielding final truth, will at least make definite contribution to the wider understanding required.

The socio-psychological viewpoint given interpretation in the following paragraphs, consequently, may be designated as "symbolic interactionism."¹ This term marks off the work of such men as Baldwin, Cooley, Dewey, Faris,

G. H. Mead, W. I. Thomas, and others, from the widely recognized "stimulus-response" approach, on one side, and from strict biological and social determinisms ("instinct" and "group mind" theories), on the other side. The designation is a particularly happy one since it sums up precisely the distinctive point of importance in the writings of the proponents of the viewpoint. It has received most systematic general exposition by Cooley, Dewey, and Mead; hence, attention may be confined largely to their work as representative. While none of these writers has dealt directly with the problem stated above, certain inferences and implications gleaned from their general insights seem very worthy of presentation. For these interpretations the present writer, while acknowledging indebtedness, must alone be held responsible.

COMMUNITY AND PERSONALITY

Undoubtedly the very center of the thinking shared by Cooley, Dewey, and Mead is their conception of human nature in terms of symbolic interaction. The fundamental character of such interaction is emphasized over and over again, particularly under the heading of "communication." The agreement is admirably summarized in Dewey's famous dictum that society, meaning both personal and group life, "not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication."² Because of this process individuals become persons and society becomes community. Both personality and community are manifestations of the process of symbolic social interaction. All personalities and specific communities emerge in and by this process. They may literally be said to be created by it, although they are not simply its passive

1. Cf., Herbert Blumer, "Social Psychology," *Man and Society*, ed. by E. P. Schmidt (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1937), pp. 144-198.

2. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1916), p. 5.

products but, being in themselves forms of symbolic interaction, enter dynamically into the creating. Furthermore, personality and community are not separate and different realities; they are but different aspects of the same reality, one distributive and the other collective, according to the angle of observation.

In this outlook community implies much more than the mere aggregation of a number of physically discrete organisms responding to the presence of each other. It denotes more than a collectional or even a symbiotic relationship. Community is based upon and arises from common understandings and commonly created and shared attitudes and enterprises. By virtue of such interaction, such communication, human beings live in a world of meanings. They associate with each other with a special kind of association. Customs, institutions, and all manner of social activities represent types of behavior consisting not just of a number of different individual ways of acting, but rather of mutually shared symbols or common attitudes which serve to define and guide individual activity within the social whole. What is of primary importance in the setting or milieu of individuals is not the activities of other individuals, but the symbols and understandings which give meaning and control to those activities.

It cannot be emphasized too much that these symbols and meanings of community are *shared* symbols and meanings. This signifies interactivity, actually living on the inside of each other's experience. In community each member, to successfully carry out his own activity, must appreciate the lines of activity of the other members who are involved in the common life. All the participants must hold the same body of expectations with regard to the activity of each in the common undertaking, for only thus is the control of individual responses and activities established. This

mutual adjustment of activities and expectations becomes possible when and as each member imaginatively, symbolically, takes the role of the total process of cooperative activity (the community) toward himself and acts accordingly. Thus, community implies a shared perspective as the basis for action. Community consists of individuals who are defined in their active roles by one another and who act toward each other on the principle of these definitions.

Furthermore, the "stuff" of which community is made is the self-same "stuff" of which personality is made. Just as community depends for its existence upon the interaction of already existent persons, creating and sharing together particular attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values; so some form of community is always prior to and constitutive of any given personality. Personality in the symbolic interactionist viewpoint represents the organization or patterning of the social conduct of the individual. This means more than his overt activity, for within the context of symbolic social interaction overt activity becomes conduct only by virtue of the fact, and to the extent, that the individual responds not to what another says or does directly, but to the interpreted meaning of what he says or does. The concept of social attitudes seeks to designate this fact. An attitude is an already prepared tendency to act in certain ways, not laid down in "original nature" as an instinct, but acquired in the course of self-development within the process of symbolic social interaction, within community. An attitude, from this standpoint, is a general readiness to act according to the meaning or value of an object or situation. For all objects and situations toward which the individual is thus prepared to act, he possesses attitudes, general or specific, and the organization of these social attitudes into a working pattern constitutes his personality.

It follows, moreover, that the process which determines or influences the meaning or value of an object for a person determines also the attitude which will be acquired along with the object; or, in other words, the definition of the object or situation confers distinctive quality upon the response. If this is true, however, what is said, in effect, is that this same process which defines our objects and qualifies our attitudes likewise shapes our personalities. Personality denotes the achievement within the life-sequence and conduct of the individual — in and by communication — of a unique and relatively stable organization of attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values. Community — which is nothing more nor less than the association of persons — social interaction on the level of attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values — is, therefore, the indispensable social matrix for development of personality.

THE NATURE OF DEVELOPMENT

But what, it properly may be asked, does development signify? Here, too, the precise denotation of the concept as acceptable in the symbolic interactionist view needs to be stated and distinguished from other possible usages.

Least acceptable of all the common usages is that in which development simply means change, any change which is taking place. Things happen; they turn out so and so; it is then said that they have developed. The direction or the quality of the change is not stressed. It may be up or down, forward or backward, organizing or disorganizing. Since nothing is completely static, development in this general sense is always going on; but such development has no meaning. It just occurs. Such denotation is too neutral.

Sometimes development is taken to mean a movement toward some fixed end, as in the attainment of adulthood

by a child. Development then naturally ceases when the goal is reached — when the child is “grown up” — or, when it at last can be said that the individual *has* personality. Development is a phase preliminary to a fulfillment or completion, something to be passed through as quickly and painlessly as possible. Personality is in itself not considered as developing; it is rather the end-product, the result of development. It is hardly necessary to say that this also is *not* what is meant by the term in the symbolic interactionist outlook.

Still another view, often closely allied with the immediately foregoing, holds that development is a natural history — that is, a series of stages, like Shakespeare's famous seven ages of man. There is admission in this view of successive changes from infancy to death, but chiefly after the manner of a predestined metamorphosis. First the larva, then the pupa, and finally the butterfly. First the blade, then the flower, and then the ripened grain. The process is enclosed; it marks an individual career. So far as any one organism is concerned, development may be measured by checking the points reached along a scored line, the extremities of which are oblivion.

The non-symbolic, individualistic, and self-enclosed character of these notions renders them thoroughly inadequate to express what must here be considered the appropriate and best meaning of development. The use of the term “growth” as a synonym is proper only if there is careful avoidance of the reductive implications of the biological analogy; and providing also that reliance is not placed upon some inner principle or entelechy which, if only it is not disturbed by untoward and external circumstances, will supposedly lead the individual on to achieve what is peculiar to his nature alone. Growth of personality, to be sure, is dependent upon biological processes, just as it is also de-

pendent upon physico-chemical processes, but it is misunderstood if confined in definition to these levels of existence.

Development of personality requires symbolic social interaction. The materials and the means of genuine development are human contacts and associations. In this respect, moreover, youth differs from youth, and age from age. One man may be at the same stage as another in his biological sequence, and yet be poles apart in personality development. Childishness, there is ample evidence to confirm, is no respecter of years; and maturity considered as a final goal is another word for death. Growth on the personal plane is reconstruction of experience to provide for progressive increase of meaning and value. The process of growing, moreover, is no more individualistic or self-enclosed in nature than is personality itself. Development of personality is a social, a communal, process. In it the self-organization of the individual undergoes modification through the influences of other persons, and in the direction of enlarged community. Personality comes into being this way, and, if it is not to be obstructive — even destructive — of the very process by which it is created, it must continue to be transformed in the same manner. The quarrel of the symbolic interactionists is not with the attainment of personality as such, but only with stagnation at any particular level of attainment. Development, in the symbolic interactionist sense, can have no fixed end or resting place; it leads on "without limit, increasing mutual support between individuals and at the same time making them increasingly unique and distinctive."³ Development

... involves a point *towards* which as well as one *from* which; it involves constant movement in a given direc-

tion. Then when the point that is for the time being the goal and end is reached, it is in turn but the starting-point of further reconstruction.⁴

The social reference of all personality development deserves repeated emphasis. True development is not found in the individual taken in separation, but rather in the social situation where activities are connected and controlled by the mutual creation and sharing of attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values. The natural limits of any so-called individual growth are transcended in this participation. Development is a function of community as well as of personality. Since personality and community are respectively but the distributive and collective aspects of the same process of symbolic interaction, the development of each is inevitably contingent upon the development of the other.

A person for various reasons, of course, may not succeed in exhausting the possibilities for development provided by the surrounding community. To this extent, however, he fails to gain full membership in the community, and he is, consequently, less of a person than he might be. Likewise, community may, under certain circumstances, restrict the personal development of its members. The mansions provided for the souls of men by the cultures of which they are participants may shut them away from freedom to grow and hold them captives and slaves within exceedingly narrow confines. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish community which functions to promote growth of personality from community which permits or prescribes fixation of personality at some specific level of organization, or from any form of association that serves simply as a carrier of the cyclical migrations of individual organisms from dust to dust. In the last analysis, only that community

3. H. N. Wieman and W. M. Horton, *Growth in Religion* (Chicago: Willet, Clark & Co., 1938), p. 333.

4. John Dewey, *Education Today* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), p. 293.

which is itself growing can function as a matrix for development of personality. The concept of development for which preference is exhibited in the symbolic interactionist outlook is, therefore, unlimited and inclusive in character, and synonymous in both personality and community with the progressive extension and enrichment of the process of symbolic social interaction.

RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY

The adjective "religious" in the formulation of the problem here considered is also deserving of special attention. Obviously, if this term bears any distinctive meaning, and hence any justification for use, its presence in the wording of the problem must inevitably affect the conclusions achieved. Careful analysis of the works of Cooley, Dewey and Mead reveals a conception of religion thoroughly symbolic — interactionist in character, with Cooley emphasizing personalizing imagination, Dewey the basic attitude of orientation or adjustment, and Mead the tendency in religions to seek completion of community. When their brief references to religious problems are supplemented by the more extensive research and writing in the field of religion represented by such persons as E. S. Ames, G. A. Coe, A. E. Haydon, W. C. Bower, and others, the plausibility of the symbolic interactionist viewpoint receives considerable enhancement. In this frame of reference it is impossible to intelligently consider the "religious" aspect of living as if it were some separate segment of reality. Religion is pictured as functioning within and throughout a total complex process of human experience, having to do specifically with the quality of adjustment achieved in this process.

The language used by the symbolic interactionist to characterize the religious aspect of experience is that of values cherished, attitudes manifested, meanings developed, and common practices undertaken. All of these clearly

involve symbolic social interaction. Indeed, it would appear that religion is symbolic interaction of the most significant type. Take away the idea, the object, the interpretation, the attitude — take away the structure of meaning implied by these things, and there is left in religion naught that signifies anything. Take away, on the other hand, personalizing imagination, the tendency to fulfill the community, devotion to comprehensive and enduring values, persistent concern for the actualizing of ideal possibilities, the progressive growth of meaning, the transvaluation of values in an integrated perspective of the total meaning and worth of life, the distinguishing features of religion — take away these things, and the distinctively human process of symbolic interaction is impoverished beyond recognition. Religion, under given circumstances of cultural history and natural environment, is this distinctively human process functioning at its best. Adjustment is most human when it is most religious, and likewise most religious when most human.

Furthermore, religion is clearly a function of persons. It has no existence apart from personality and community. It is personality functioning to fulfill itself. It is community functioning to produce more and richer community. Personality has been defined as the achievement within the life-sequence and conduct of the individual — in and by symbolic interaction — of a unique and relatively stable organization of attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values. Personality represents adjustment on the level of symbolic interaction; adjustment which, in growing personality, however, is not mere static attainment, but dynamic equilibrium, a moving pattern of behavior, a systematic course of responding. Hence, being religious is being a person in the largest sense possible under given and cultural circumstances. This is the truth behind the

commonly heralded concern of religion for "personal values." An elevated religious outlook implies self-respect and respect for others in terms of the "sacredness of personality." Religion is literally "the discovery of persons."⁵ Religion is present "wherever the experience of self-realizing persons is under way."⁶ But this is precisely because religion and personality are composed of the selfsame "stuff," — because the factors which enter into the make-up and functioning of each are attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values. Religion is integration, transvaluation, enhancement of these factors in creatively oriented and adjusted personality.

If the adjective "religious" denotes a certain quality of experience in this manner, then the religious personality is one, and anyone, in whom this quality becomes a dominant trait. Religious personality is creatively oriented and adjusted personality. Put in another way, this means personality organized on the basis of a general attitude. A general attitude is a "set of the soul" which determines the expressive character of a multitude of specific responses. The religious attitude is one in which specific values are sought and particular actions carried out because of their contribution to the comprehensive and enduring worth of life. The quality of this attitude has been well expressed as follows:

Every human situation admits of two kinds of using. It may be so managed that the human beings involved in it shall be thwarted in their development, hindered in their activities, lowered in their virtue, degraded in their quality. Or it may be used to accomplish human ends, to make the lives of men and women richer and

more worthwhile, to create human values, to achieve the growth and freedom of the human spirit There is, in the last resort, only one question in relation to which all other questions take their proper subsidiary places and from which they derive whatever significance they have. That question is, How can the quality of human life be exalted — not here or there, not merely in this favored place or in that center of my affections, but wherever human beings are alive, wherever men and women achieve or fail to achieve the qualities of growth and freedom.⁷

From the standpoint given exposition in these pages, this question is essentially a religious question — indeed, *the* religious question. Increase of value, development of meaning, freedom of the human spirit, growth of personality are but different modes of expressing the same great objective. When all aspects of human association and existence are brought to this bar of judgment, the attitude which results, and in which this judgment becomes continuous, is a religious attitude, and personality organized on the basis of it, religious personality.

COMMUNITY and RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY

The important point to grasp from this understanding of religious personality is the fundamental and formative significance of the qualities and characteristics of community for the qualities and characteristics of religious personality. There is nowhere in human life any apparent break in this relationship. What holds for one type or condition of personality must hold for others, and, if anything, even more surely for religious

5. G. A. Coe, *Psychology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), pp. 227-228.

6. W. C. Bower, *Character Through Creative Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), p. 249.

7. A. Meikeljohn, "Progressive Education in the Liberal College," *Higher Education Faces the Future*, ed. by P. A. Schilpp (New York: Horace Liveright, 1930), p. 303.

personality since it represents such a high level of functioning in symbolic interaction. The key to understanding of development is found in "differential association." From sinner to saint, from criminal to statesman, this is true. Religious personality, like all personality, is habituation to a way of life, the organization and expression in community of attitudes and interpretations. It is the sharing of experience and the carrying on of common enterprises and the communication of ideals. It differs from non-religious personality in the quality and functional effectiveness of the patterns presented in association, but not at all in the genetic socio-psychological processes involved. Primary factors in its determination and development are the attitudes and values of other persons, — of community.

Inevitably, therefore, the symbolic interactionist turns community-ward in search of the conditions for development of religious personality. This is the basis for the strongly worded statement by Dewey against any supposition that the present chaotic scene can be met religiously by regeneration of the isolated individual soul. His statement deserves more study from religious leaders than it has received.

Aside from the fact that there is no consensus as to what a new religious attitude is to center itself about, the injunction puts the cart before the horse. Religion is not so much a root of unity as it is its flower or fruit. The very attempt to secure integration of the individual, and through him for society, by means of a deliberate and conscious cultivation of religion, is itself proof of how far the individual has become lost through detachment from acknowledged social values The sense of wholeness which is urged as the essence of religion can be built up and sustained only through membership in a society which has attained a degree of unity. The at-

tempt to cultivate it first in individuals and then extend it to form an organically unified society is fantasy.⁸

But the view goes even further. It is at one with the growing recognition of the importance of environment in the process of personality development, but it holds that the tendency to think in terms of a given social structure, to refer macroscopically to the role of the family, the play-group, the gang, the local community, the school, the state, the church, misses the mark. A careful reading of the writings of the symbolic interactionists leads to a realization that the developmental situation implies specific conditions *in* the family, *in* the local or face-to-face community, *in* the church, and so on. That is, it is not enough to look for religious nurture to any one or a number of these natural social groupings taken as such. The family may or may not be a constructive influence. The church, the state, or the neighborhood may or may not provide the proper conditions. Under present cultural circumstances it is practically impossible to point to any of these established patterns as clear-cut examples of community which adequately and invariably functions to promote growth of religious personality. Hence, in seeking to understand, or to create, such community, it is necessary to go still further beneath the surface of social reality to discover specific factors in community which may combine in home, school, church, or elsewhere, to make up the positive matrix.

There is, apparently, no fixed or additive relation among these more specific requisites of growth. As manifestations of symbolic interaction they are not exclusive of each other. In submitting the outline below, no claim of completeness is made. Since the problem projected specifies the *social matrix*, furthermore,

8. John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1930), pp. 63-64.

physical and biological processes are not considered. While it may be said that such processes receive epitomization in the social so that they require no separate consideration, the viewpoint represented by Cooley, Dewey, and Mead would certainly be the last to minimize the importance of certain physical, chemical, biological, and physiological requirements for the optimum functioning of human personality. Here, however, the focus is on the social matrix.

The symbolic interactionist also gives full recognition to the variant and creative possibilities resident in the behavior of individuals. Consequently, it is clear that no list of social factors, however complete or potent, can be offered as a guarantee, simply on the basis of their presence in the social milieu, that the desired type of personal growth will take place. The conditions may be supplied, but the growth itself cannot be forced. All that can safely be assumed, therefore, is that, if an individual is denied appropriate experience, his growth will be checked and his attitudes and values distorted. A culture which does not provide qualitatively appropriate stimuli for growth will inevitably stunt the persons of which it is composed. The positive corollary is that persons *may* become increasingly free, and life correspondingly richer, where conditions are intelligently cultivated. If the opportunity for growth is lacking, no substitute will suffice; but, if the opportunity is painstakingly provided after the manner of the true gardener, the bloom may excel imagination in its emergent splendor. Heretofore results in the growth of religious personality have been all too dependent upon chance arrangement of the conducive factors. What is needed is a scientific agriculture of the spirit. The proper conditions for growth must be understood and supplied.

From the standpoint here given exposition at least six such conditions may be singled out as especially important to

religious growth. These include (1) intimacy and completeness of association; (2) variety and range of stimuli and suggestions; (3) voluntary and cognitive participation in commonly shared ends and activities; (4) deliberative rather than impulsive method in dealing with problems, conflicts, and crises; (5) devotion to the realization of ideal possibilities; and (6) unity in an organizing perspective capable of giving meaning and value to specific phases of life. Each of these warrants elaboration.

INTIMACY AND COMPLETENESS OF ASSOCIATION

All who are familiar with the work of Cooley will recognize this first of the requisites for personal religious growth, the condition in community of intimacy and completeness of association, as the essential psychological characteristic of the so-called primary group. Cooley emphasized especially "the sort of sympathy and mutual identification for which 'we' is the natural expression a certain intimacy and fusion of personalities."⁹ It is this type of association which

. fills out our minds with imaginations of the thought and feeling of other members of the group, and of the group as a whole, so that, for many purposes, we really make them a part of ourselves and identify our self-feeling with them.¹⁰

If there is any one aspect of this type of association which deserves special mention in connection with the development of religious personality, it is the tendency of primary groups to deal with persons as wholes. The relations are person to person, not office to office, rank to rank, class to class. The reactions are those of whole persons, not of fragments of persons. There is a

9. C. H. Cooley, *Social Organization* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), pp. 23, 26.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

completeness of intercourse and an emotional bond of identity which cannot, by the very nature of the situation, enter into institutionalized role-taking and impersonal behavior. Since the general attitude which makes a person truly religious is one of orientation or unification of self in terms of a total meaning and worth of experience, a necessary condition is a community in which such personal integration is presupposed and cherished, in which persons are looked upon and treated as values or ends in themselves.

The absence of this condition of association from so much of modern urbanized living is undoubtedly a far greater threat to growth in religion than any conceivable unorthodoxy of belief or practice. The rapidly changing social world of the present tends to multiply contacts, but also to render them more superficial, more mechanical, more impersonal. Conscious hypocrisy is perhaps not more prevalent today than ever. In an impersonal environment, however, there is a constant need of being on the defensive — of putting on armor against the world, of fencing oneself in with comfortable lies, and of relying upon prejudices and stereotypes to justify inhumanity to man. Human relationships tend to become conspiracies in keeping others from knowing who you are, what your real purposes are, how weak you may be, or how perplexed and lost. The great fear is of personal exposure, when, in truth, such exposure is the one thing most needful.

If there is to be any real growth in religious personality, a community must obtain in which it is not possible to live a hidden life; where the soul does not become "sicklied o'er with a pale cast" of dead convention; where a man, at least occasionally, *must* see himself as others see him, with all defenses stripped away, with pettiness and confusion made apparent, with false pride duly sanfor-

ized and shrunk. Only in an atmosphere of complete and unavoidable intimacy does this happen; and only where one can reveal himself without fear of being condemned! Judgment and correction there must be, and will be — in a concerned and friendly fashion — but never condemnation. From this relation purification and regeneration are derived. This is the axe that cuts away the dead wood that new and more vigorous growth may ensue. This, in the Christian tradition, has been the relation between a man and God. The tradition carries meaning, however, only as men first build up the experience in personal intercourse among themselves, and then give it social extension. The parable of the forgiving father and the wasteful, but penitent son has more than its imagery alone rooted in the primary group.

By this token, it is made clear why many families, churches, and neighborhoods, though ostensibly primary groups — being face-to-face associations — fail to qualify as such, and as true seed-beds of spiritual development. As Faris has declared, whenever pseudo-political forms of control are imported, or when a pattern of dependence is prolonged to satisfy emotional immaturity, the very essence of the primary group is lost.¹¹

VARIETY AND RANGE OF STIMULI

Important as the primary group relationship is, however, it is by itself not enough to satisfy the purpose of religious growth in the modern world. Primitive man had the primary group, but the opportunity for genuine personality development was nevertheless narrowly restricted. That the process of social change has been exceedingly uneven; that it has lacked any semblance of in-

11. Cf., Ellsworth Faris, "The Primary Group: Essence and Accident," *American Journal of Sociology*, XXXVIII (1932), pp. 41-50.

telligent control; and, therefore, that a suicidal reaction has all but wiped out the gains and sunk the world again into an abyss of barbarism, need not be gain-said in order to realize clearly the significance of a variety and range of stimuli for the promotion of personal and community development. If the matter is happening today, it would appear indubitable that whenever suggestion is single or restricted, people are at its mercy and inevitably fall into fanaticism and eventual stagnation.

The symbolic interactionist is especially emphatic on this point. He stresses the importance of continued advancement in communication. Such expansion, it is true, often brings with it considerable confusion. But the fact of confusion is not itself bad. A completely static society is a fiction; hence, what should be feared is not that change will take place and confusion occur, but that confusion as the result of change may remain unrecognized. The real dangers lie in seeking refuge in the illusion of some unchanging reality, and in turning to coercive and dictatorial patterns for coping with change. The argument of the symbolic interactionist is that variety and range of stimuli is opportunity and means growth if embraced, and such confusion as temporarily results a normal expectancy in the process of personal and social reconstruction. At any rate, the only recourse is additional growth. Activities must be of such a nature as to make for continuous widening of the area of common interests and concerns.

The sectarian tendency in religion needs re-examination in the light of this statement. In the promulgation of set creeds, dogmatic and absolutistic thinking is at a premium. Some item of belief or practice is considered final and all important. Attention is then deflected from continuous widening of the shared meanings and values to the exaltation or glorification of some already given value.

Whenever this happens, the central concern is no longer the optimum growth of personality, or the "more abundant life," but becomes instead a form of tyranny. Blind acceptance becomes a virtue, and each person is expected to sacrifice willingly for a value that can at best represent only a portion of life. It is highly significant in this connection that the sect is always composed of sectarians — that is, of persons bearing the peculiar and inflexible stamp of the sect in their appearance, attitudes, ideas, and ways of acting. Upon entering the sect, the individual supposedly becomes "a new man." Very commonly his new status is referred to as a rebirth. Too often, however, this does not mean entering upon a process of growth. The new man is a different but nevertheless a finished — a "saved" — person. He becomes typed, one unit of a highly homogeneous mass.

Dogmatism, a static exclusiveness, restricts the variety and range of stimuli, puts a halter on the process of symbolic social interaction; and, in doing that, its product inevitably is arrested personality. Considered from the standpoint of the numbers so affected in both space and time, the picture in terms of wasted human possibilities is appalling to an extreme.

VOLUNTARY AND COGNITIVE PARTICIPATION

A necessary concomitant to a broadening field of suggestions, and freedom from purely traditional prescriptions, is voluntary and cognitive participation in community. In one sense, this is the *sine qua non* of all community. A degree of concern for common ends and conscious regard for the success of group practices, issuing in responsible activity on the part of individuals, is the meaning of community in the symbolic interactionist view. Only when the consequences of combined action are perceived and become the objects of desire and effort on the part of all participants, do

the expressions "we" and "our" acquire full meaning.

Realization of this fact lies behind Dewey's emphasis upon *interest* in his educational writings. Interest denotes for him the attitude of a participant in the course of affairs. It has a double aspect, manifesting both a solicitude for future consequences, and a tendency to act in such a way as to assure better, and avert worse, consequences. An interested individual, therefore, is one who is eager to give events a push in the "right direction." In enlisting the activity and interest of the individual, it is highly important for the group to make him a sharer or partner in the associated undertaking so that he feels its success as his success and its failure as his failure. When such identification occurs, the individual becomes alert to recognize the special aims of the group and the means to be employed in securing success. If he does not achieve such interest, his participation will remain capricious, mechanical, and lifeless at best. Understanding commitment, hard as it may be to attain, is acknowledged to be superior to any automatic and unwitting obedience.¹²

The tendency to think of the individual as an autonomous unit, and of experience as something complete in the impulses and emotions of the organism alone, perverts this theory of interest. Modern education which is "child-centered" in this latter sense represents an extreme as detrimental to real growth of personality as anything offered by so-called "traditionalists" and "authoritarians." To be truly self-centered, one must have

. a rich field of social and natural relations, which are at first external to the self, but now incorporated into personal experience so that they give weight, balance, and order

The fundamental thing is to find the types of experience that are worth having, not merely for the moment, but because of what they lead to — the questions they raise, the problems they create, the demands for new information they suggest, the activities they invoke, the larger and expanding fields into which they continuously open.¹³

Properly understood, then, interest is outreaching. It is emancipation from the immediate. It assumes responsibility. It is what is meant by character and by self-discipline; and freedom, too, in the largest sense.

As this view of interest inveighs sharply against the misconception that experience is bounded by the immediate hedonic states of the organism; so also it cautions against the fallacy contained in the usual "egoism-altruism" dichotomy, according to which it is believed that self-interest is elemental in the natural man and must be transcended before the individual can become a "socialized" personality. The starting point of the symbolic interactionist is not with some alleged self-interest in the individual, but with a social process that gives character and content to any and all interests. Accordingly, desire is not thought to be an inherent drive of a selfish organism; it is rather a complicated acquisition. The self is a structure of social attitudes. Desires and interests represent complexes of such attitudes focused upon specific but socially defined goals or objects. The individual, therefore, is not "socialized" by losing self, but by acquiring it. The very meaning of "selfishness" or "self-interest" is a social meaning, socially determined, and always relative to a given culture pattern. Thus, self-interest in one society means taking all you can from the other fellow; in another society it means giving all you can to him. Self-interest

12. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, pp. 16-17; 146-147.

13. John Dewey, *Education Today*, pp. 219-220.

means, in one situation, looting your neighbor's house, saving yourself at others' expense; in another, hanging on a cross between two thieves.

The question is not how to get rid of self, but how to get more of self. Self-expansion, not self-denial, is the ideal. To use Mead's terminology, a man with a small "other" has a small "self," and one whose interests encompass the common welfare has by virtue of that fact a self correspondingly large. The great personalities of history, and particularly the great religious saints and leaders, were invariably those possessed of the most self-interest in this sense. Their followers have felt themselves in the presence of greatness because in these persons self and other could not be artificially separated into opposing categories. Their highest interests were none the less self-interests because they embraced expansive social ends.

To be adequately personal, the individual must be involved in a process in which other persons are also gaining adequacy of life for themselves. This requires a community in which voluntary and cognitive participation is a cherished value; in which the individual is encouraged to contribute of his best, and decisions of social consequence are arrived at through cooperative thinking. The proper name for such community is *democracy*.

DELIBERATION IN DEALING WITH CONFLICT

A fourth requisite of community in giving full scope to personal religious development is a reflective rather than an impulsive method of dealing with problems, conflicts, and crises of life. The role of deliberation in conduct has been given extended treatment in the writings of Dewey. The question of method in dealing with conflict is of such key importance in religious orientation, however, that certain additional remarks will not be out of place.

As centered in vital adjustment, the religious quality of experience emerges in a situation of tension. Religion is concerned with the attainment of precious values, the more precious because they are so difficult to attain and so precarious to hold. William James was of the opinion that the religious mind is essentially a tender mind, a mind of extraordinary sensitivity, open to hurt as well as to glory. It is keenly absorbed with the problem of alternatives. A scale of values is set up, and cross-criticism of values goes on in the search for the "right direction," for orientation or salvation. And all of this implies deliberation of the most complex and delicate type. It is symbolic interaction serving its highest purpose in guiding the conduct of the individual and of groups, and is therefore to be contrasted with all short-cuts of a non-symbolic character.

Since emotion figures largely in religious behavior, it is sometimes accepted as a distinct element and a mode of response. What needs to be stressed is that emotion is an organic accompaniment of all conscious human experience, but particularly when matters of serious moment are at hand. Emotion is therefore inevitable. Since religion is concerned with organizing values — that is, with matters of first importance — it is bound to have a strong emotional component. Integrated within an intelligent prospect and plan of conduct, this emotional component becomes motive power. Not so integrated, it is wasteful racing of the motor, and under some circumstances may become a dangerous substitute for locomotion. A habit of giving way to emotional outbursts is a symptom of childishness and in the extreme, of mental abnormality. "The lunatic fringe" is no idle epithet in connection with some manifestations of emotion in religion. Whereas successful action harnesses emotion, the latter entertained for itself disperses and dissipates action.

The problems of life are poignantly real. The deliberative method of dealing with them is often most trying, for to some extent the deliberative process tends to prolong the tension of conflict. It holds up overt releasing behavior until consequences can be reviewed and alternatives considered. This is why thought is said to be painful. It is full of suspense and sometimes of anxiety. Consequently, if one mode of retreat from the reality presented in problems is through emotional upheaval, still another, and equally if not more dangerous, is premature recourse to overt action. Action, to be sure, has a definiteness, a certainty about it which is immediately satisfying. Not certainty as to outcome, but a sense of full and untrammelled commitment. The dies are cast in action; there can be no hesitation, no turning back. It is "sink or swim." But such action is blind. It is brute force. It succeeds astoundingly in smashing things, but it does not necessarily get anywhere, except into worse entanglement. It is likely to pile up before it equally or more violent reaction. It leaves problems unsolved, complicates them, often brings matters to such a condition that solution becomes impossible. Action is important; indeed, ultimately it is the key to better life. But thinking is a part of action that retains its human quality, and a part calculated to save wear and tear. All that is most human, most religious, points to action guided by intelligent forethought and transmuted with concern.

Eternal vigilance is required to prevent premature resolution of conflict. Even when the non-symbolic pitfalls are avoided, the dangers are by no means past. Mead has pointed out that conflicts occur, not on the level of "primitive impulses" but among selves and groups composed of selves. Each of these has its own definite social structure, highly complex and organized and unified, composed of a number of sets of social atti-

tudes. Whether the conflict is between different personalities, or groups, the mode of settlement or termination requires reconstruction of the particular social attitudes and modification of the given framework of social relationships. These reconstructions, moreover, must be performed by the minds of the individuals in whose experience or between whose selves the conflicts occur. The real danger is that the self, the person, the group will shy away from the required reconstruction, will attempt to ignore the social implications of the conflict, and may even seek to build a wall of isolation in the shape of some delusional system to protect against the necessary modification. It is at this point, particularly, that communication and communion with others is crucial, and deliberative methods of dealing with problems of greatest merit. To keep the channels of contact with others open, to retain a realistic sense of the "other" which operates within the experience of the self to give it organization, there must be free and critical interchange of insights and attitudes. Whether this is possible or not is largely dependent upon a disposition in the community to tolerate conflict as the Orient gate to greater things, and to encourage deliberation in both public and private experience.

REALIZATION OF POSSIBILITIES

It becomes clear from the foregoing, furthermore, that growing is a leading forward into the future. Early in human infancy life begins to be lived on the basis of expectations. When men no longer look to coming events, they are ready for the final sleep.

Particularly is the religious life concerned with the expanding, idealizing aspects of consciousness. It seeks mutual adjustment and integration of interests in terms of ideal ends. It is a social *quest* for more abundant life. It sets man's outlook in a frame of reference of inclusive relations that extend beyond his immediate and specific ex-

perience. It bids him keep open "the soul's east window of divine surprise." It is concerned with fulfillment of community. It is devotion to a cause, to the realization of a comprehending ideal.

Growth in religious personality is doubly dependent upon the realization of possibilities. As a process of becoming, growth is itself not finished but always a possibility. As religious, growth is oriented toward more and more spacious evaluation. When St. Paul said, "I count not myself to have arrived . . . but I press on to the mark . . .," he gave immortal expression to this quality of religious growth. Present accomplishment is as nothing to what yet must be. All achieved goods are but the stepping stones to further good.

Not only are instinctive satisfactions, however abundant and however secure, insufficient for man, but his disciplined goodness also furnishes no stopping-place for his spirit. Whenever a status is achieved, there arises a fresh and original judgment upon it from a standpoint beyond itself. And when this standpoint has secured assent and begun to control conduct, behold, it comes under the scrutiny of still another newly apprehended and difficulty-breeding ideal. Men have always to repent of their own goodness!¹⁴

This process has to go on if religious personality is really to grow. Man must continue to seek, to inquire into, and to aspire toward the highest possibilities of value which he can conceive. This is experimental living. This, in the finest sense, is what is meant by the spiritual life. Always it is moving in the direction of the unattained. Since such faith and action obviously cannot be individualistic, community support is very important. There must be a "fellowship of the holy imagination." The person

will always be the center and consummation of such experience, "but what an individual actually is in his life-experience depends upon the nature and movement of associated life."¹⁵

AN ORGANIZING PERSPECTIVE

The sixth in this list of community requisites for religious growth has already been implied, especially in the discussion of the primary group where reference was made to whole persons. How, it might be asked, can wholeness in personality develop without a corresponding Wholeness in community? Fortunately, the work of Mead was particularly explicit on this matter. He made much, for instance, of the term "the generalized other" and pointed out that personality is achieved only as the individual is able to take the attitude of the total process of community toward any and all of his own behavior. In the generalized other the attitudes attendant upon fulfilling numerous more or less isolated roles achieve integration. Since Mead employed an organized process, the game, to illustrate the way in which the individual acquires the generalized other, there can be no doubt that in Mead's thinking a degree of social integration was considered prerequisite to personal integration.¹⁶

That this is a crucial problem in relation to development of religious personality is amply attested in the concern of religious writers over the apparent social chaos of the present. Bower, for example, emphasizes the function of religion in setting each type of experience "in the total context of the experience of the person or group." Religion insists that the individual have opportunity

14. G. A. Coe, *What is Christian Education?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 91.

15. From a statement by John Dewey in *Living Philosophies: A Series of Intimate Credos* (Boston: Simon & Schuster, 1929), p. 31.

16. G. H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), pp. 150-160.

to see life whole, with particular interests and pursuits regarded as details in a complex and intricate pattern, "like the details of a canvas, the lines and masses of a cathedral, or the *nuances* of a symphony." To perceive the significance or the beauty of details, one must have perspective and a sense of their relation to the whole.¹⁷ Numerous other citations could be offered to the same effect.

Agreement seems to be general that the lack of unity manifested in Western culture just now is a total phenomenon and not simply a matter of a few associations. A paradoxical and confusing dualism of change and resistance to change seems to rule the modern outlook, dividing it in a number of ways against itself. Some phases of the prevailing order are so entrenched in the customs and authorities exercised by special groups that they more or less successfully defy reconstruction, while other aspects of the culture have been undergoing rapid transformation. Tension as a result of these *lags* and *leads* is productive of profound disorganization. Comprehensive social control tends to break down, and predatory interests are liberated. Individualistic ends supersede the common welfare, and new mechanisms are employed for anachronistic purposes and to bulwark outworn loyalties. The alternative thus presented has been put succinctly as follows:

A simple, stable society has proved feasible, for many of them have survived for centuries. A complex and changing society is, however, still on trial. Man must master the problem of organizing a dynamic society on a regional and world basis or else go back to primitivity.¹⁸

Human society is bleeding today for want of richer and more extensive community. The old, partial loyalties and attitudes serve but to feed the flames of the holocaust. No fragmentary community out of the past is adequate to assure salvation. The new interdependence is above and beyond all previous patterns. Something much nearer the whole of life and nature must be brought into the cultural perspective, into the minds and response patterns of individuals and groups the world around. This is the sort of thing talked about by great spiritual leaders of the past, though never on such universal lines as are necessary today. On the other hand, there are at hand today universal means never before at the command of men, universal power in technology, universal communication, and world-wide organizations of many types — all of which could be enlisted as factors in the creation of a universal humanity, a world community.

It is clear from all this that an organizing perspective is one necessary condition if community is really to operate as a matrix for development of religious personality. Unmistakably, the symbolic interactionist approach points to the process which alone can supply the appropriate *vis a vis* for a real "new order." Increased symbolic interaction means expansion of community, widespread mutual creation and sharing of attitudes, meanings, purposes, and values. Of all affairs, this selfsame process is fraught with greatest religious significance. It is the only true repository and creative nexus of values. Its modification and enrichment encompass the spiritual hope of the race. In this or any other generation those factors and forces which serve to foster the extension and enrichment of the process of symbolic social interaction are the truly religious factors and forces of the time.

17. W. C. Bower, *Religion and the Good Life* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1933), pp. 82-83.

18. R. L. Sutherland and J. L. Woodward, *Introductory Sociology* (New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1940), p. 805.

THE CHURCH AN AGENCY OF RELIGIOUS GROWTH

In the foregoing discussion it has been argued that six specific conditions in community are required if there is to be a true matrix for development of religious personality. From the standpoint of further investigation and practical application of the insights gleaned from the study of the symbolic interactionist viewpoint, these six specific conditions in community may be looked upon as criteria for assessing the effectiveness of all particular milieus, fellowships, groups, and institutions in relation to the objective of personal religious growth.

Religious leaders will naturally think of the church, and will ask whether this movement and embodiment of religion serves as a matrix for personal development. The age-old assumption is that it does. But what can be said in the light of the criteria proposed? The full scope of such application passes beyond the bounds of the task assumed in this study, but it is appropriate to conclude with recognition of next steps to be taken.

Undoubtedly there are ways in which the church does operate positively as a matrix for personal growth in religion. It sometimes functions as a true primary group, or gives shelter and sustenance to such groups. It sets the life of its members in a perspective of comprehending, enduring, and spiritual values. At times it offers a sympathetic fellowship in which judgment and reconciliation takes place in creative manner. It embodies a cherished way of life in ideal personalities with whom reconstructive intercourse is possible.

There are also, of course, certain negative factors which suggest themselves for appraisal. The church has often been sectarian and dogmatic in spirit and action. It has been formalistic and legalistic, sometimes more concerned over

ritual conformity than over spiritual attainment. As an institution, the church partakes of the characteristics of all institutions in being a comparatively rigid part of the social structure, in offering resistance to change, in fixing loyalty upon values which were operative in past experience, but which may not adequately fulfill the needs of the present. Under such circumstances institutional structure becomes definitely an impediment to religious growth. The church is a candidate for reconstruction along with the other institutions of society.

Finally, in any factual appraisal of the present religious scene, it is well to remember that religion is not wholly an institutional matter. From the standpoint of personal living it is a quality which arises when the proper formative conditions in community and personality are supplied. When because of rigidity and anachronism the religious institution fails to minister to changing needs and outlooks and leaves all untouched important aspects of a complex social life, the vacuum does not remain unfilled. For many this may signify loss of opportunity for religious development. But many will also achieve in spite of the handicap. They will find and integrate the formative conditions outside of institutional walls. Multitudes of men and women have, accordingly, achieved highly in the modern world while maintaining the most tenuous relations with organized religion.

These statements do not offer a scientific survey of the Christian community and the church. They do indicate the possible fruitfulness of such a survey when the six suggested criteria of community are employed. An aware and self-appraising church would be the first to detect the elements of weakness and strength in the community of which it is a part. It would seek to establish those conditions best suited to the highest development of religious persons.

